UNESCO INSTITUTE for STATISTICS
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

FEATURE FILM DIVERSITY

UIS FACT SHEET MAY 2013, No.24

This fact sheet presents the latest data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) on feature films. The 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions advocates the development, collection, analysis and dissemination of statistics on the diversity of cultural expressions. Since 2007, the UIS has used its biennial feature film statistics survey to assess cultural diversity in cinema. Based on data for 52 countries from the 2012 survey, this fact sheet examines the diversity in film production and consumption.

MEASURES OF DIVERSITY

Feature film diversity is examined in two ways: through an analysis of the language of national film production and by the characteristics of the origin of films viewers choose to watch. The UIS data collection raises questions worth closer examination: Does film production reflect the diversity of languages spoken in a country? Is there diversity in the origin of the most popular movies viewed in a country? How popular are nationally-produced movies within their country of origin?

DIVERSITY OF LANGUAGE IN DOMESTIC FILM PRODUCTION

In the field of cinema, diversity can be measured by the number of languages in which films are produced in a country. **Figure 1** shows the language of films produced in 2011 in four countries: India, Morocco, South Africa and Spain. Each country represents an example of a different linguistic context, ranging from the presence of several vernacular languages in South Africa to regional linguistic diversity in India. The language profiles of these countries are diverse as are the size and characteristics of their populations, but they are similar in the fact that they produce films in many languages.

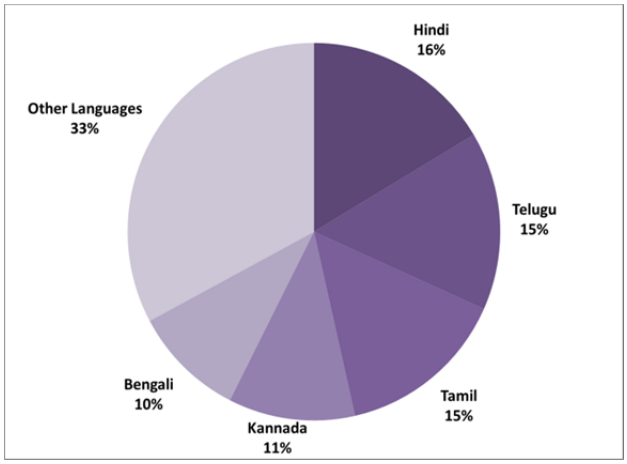
Figure 1 shows that in three of the four countries presented the majority of films were produced in a dominant language. In Morocco, 79% of films were produced in Arabic, followed by 17% in French and 4% in English. By contrast, in India there was no dominant language for film production: 16% of all films produced were in Hindi, followed by Telugu at 15.3%, Tamil at 14.7%, Kannada at 11% and Bengali at 10%, making India the most diverse country for language of film production.

Spain also presents an interesting case study. Although the dominant language of film production is Spanish Castellano (66%), there remains a diversity of language in film production with Catalan (accounting for 9% of films), Basque (4%) and Galician (2%), reflecting the variety of languages found in this country. In South Africa, while English is the dominant language (59%), a second language – Afrikaner – accounts for another 32% of monolingual film production. These shares would be higher if bilingual films in both of these languages were included. On the other hand, African languages such as Zulu only represented approximately 5% of film production in 2011.

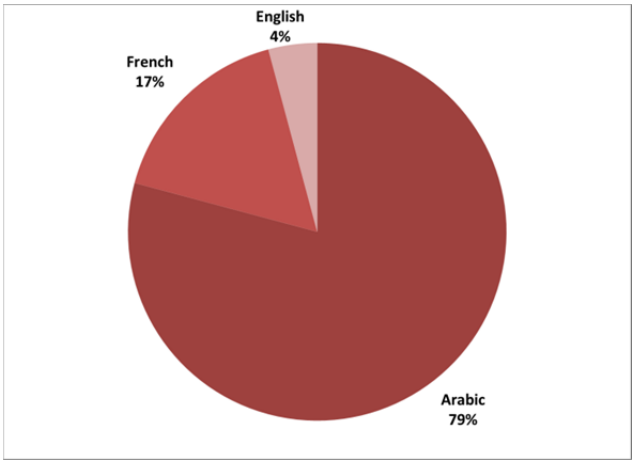
Interestingly, film production exists in English in all four countries profiled. This could be explained by several factors, including the impact of co-productions on the domestic film industry and on attracting a global audience.

FIGURE 1. LANGUAGE DIVERSITY IN FILM PRODUCTION, 2011

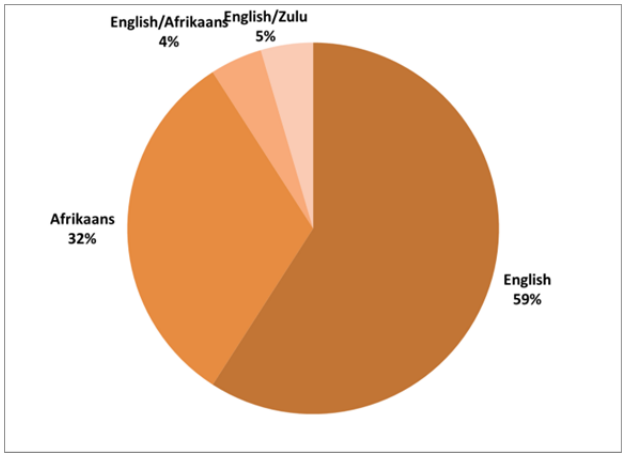
India



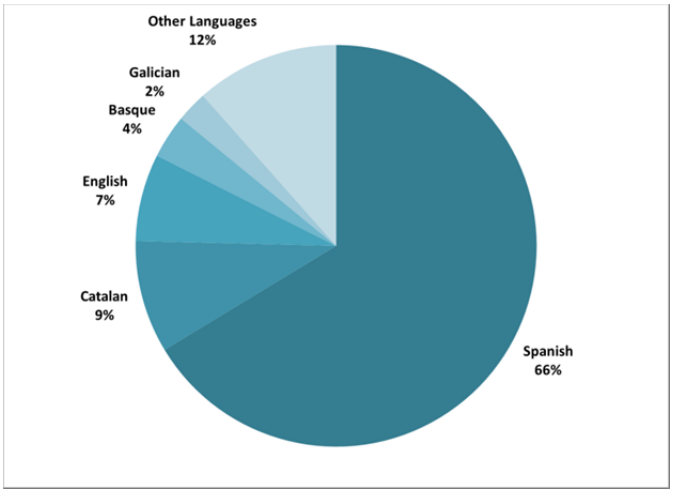
Morocco



South Africa



Spain



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, April 2013.

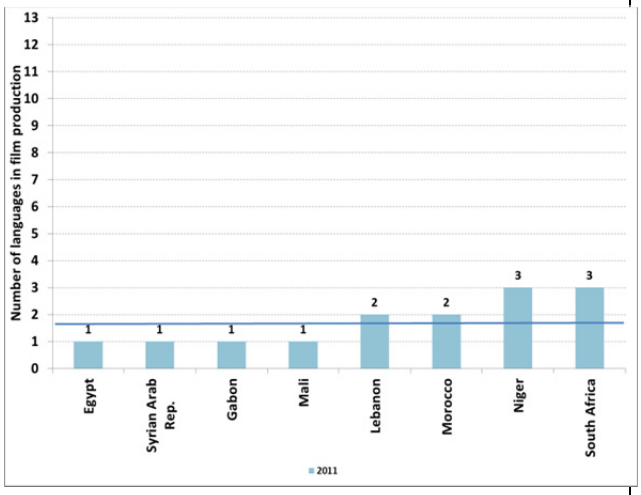
TRENDS IN THE LANGUAGE DIVERSITY OF FILM PRODUCTION

Turning to a regional perspective, is there more diversity in the field of cinema in a particular region? **Figure 2** shows the number of languages used in film production in different regions of the world in 2011. Europe is the most diverse in terms of languages, with countries producing films on average in more than five languages. This is increasingly due to co-productions. In Western Europe, the United Kingdom ranked first with film production in 12 languages. These figures include the country's widespread production of "Bollywood" style movies in Hindi. In Eastern Europe, films in Serbia were also produced in 12 languages.

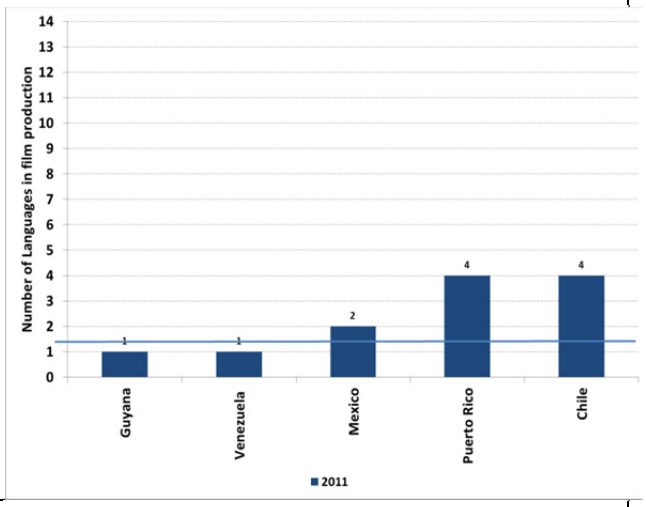
The Arab States and sub-Saharan African regions show the least language diversity with films produced in two languages for most countries for which data are available. This was also the case for other regions.

FIGURE 2 TRENDS IN LANGUAGE USED IN FILM PRODUCTION BY REGION IN 2011

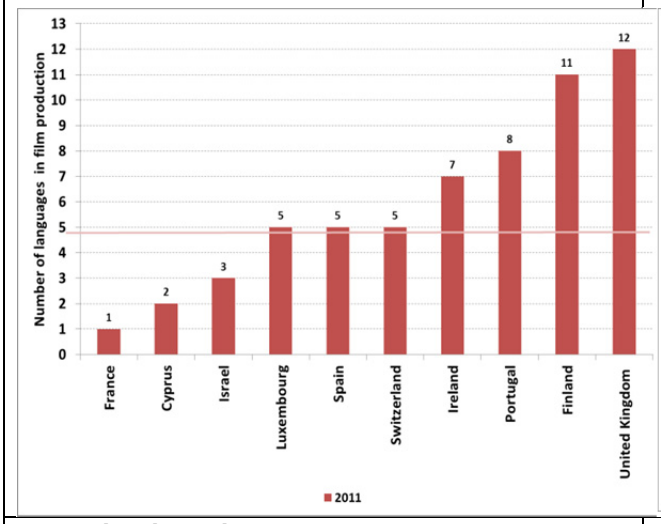
Arab States and sub-Saharan Africa



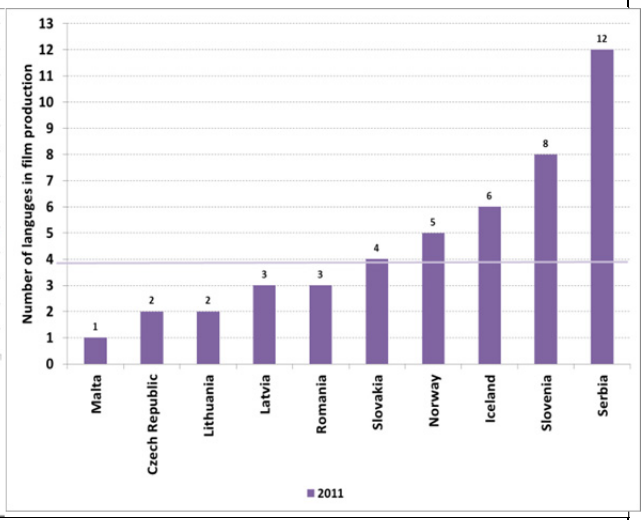
Latin America and the Caribbean



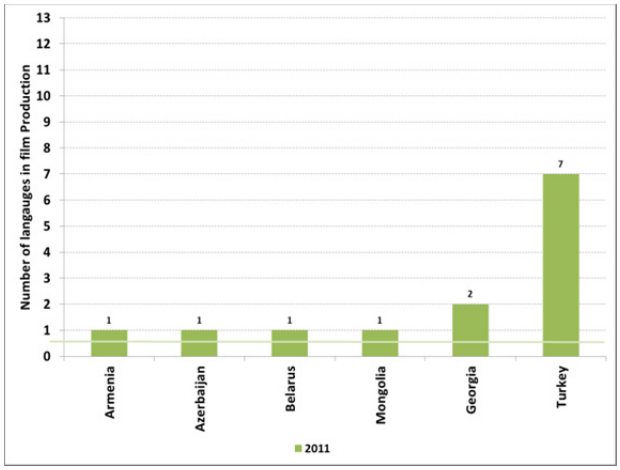
Western Europe



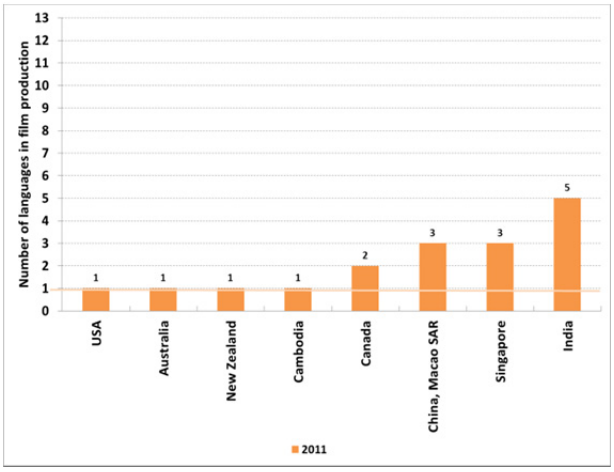
Eastern Europe



Central Asia and Eastern Europe



Other countries



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, M2013

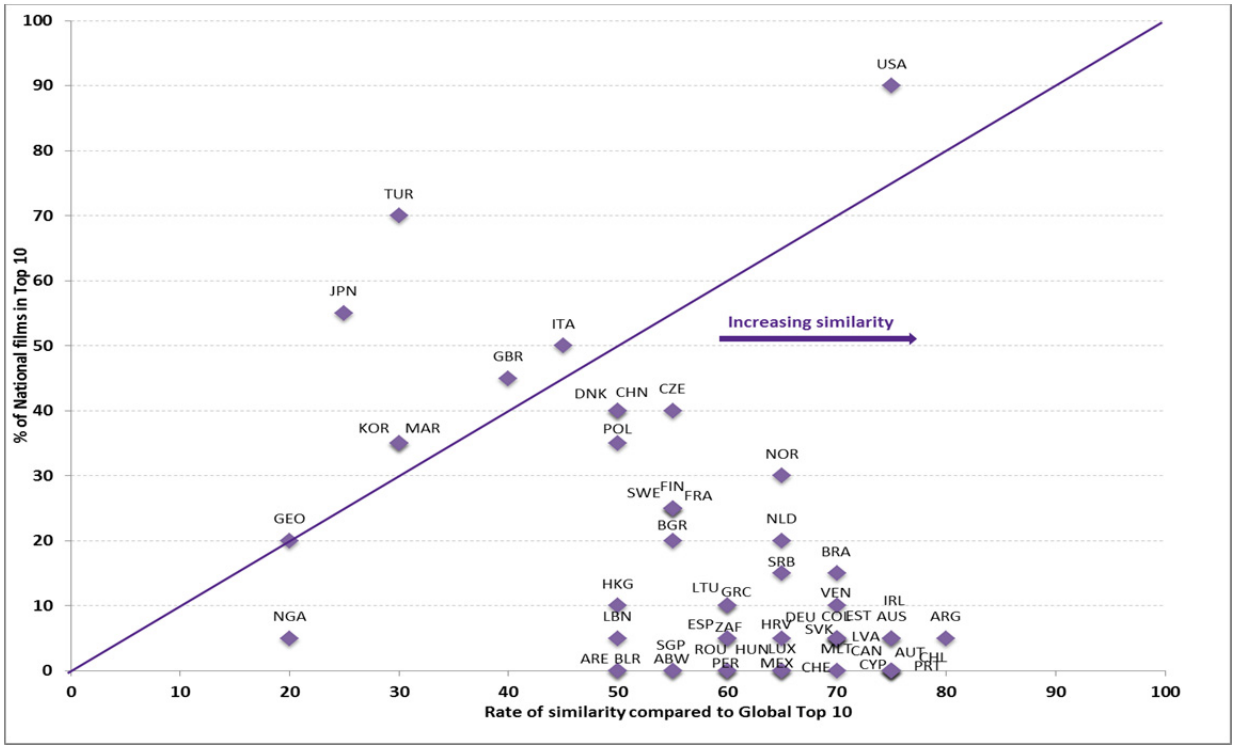
DIVERSITY OR HOMOGENEITY OF FILMS VIEWED

Another important indicator which sheds light on the level of diversity analyses the country of origin of the Top 10 movies viewed globally. Furthermore, the indicator on the degree of similarity, the likelihood that viewers in many countries are watching the same Top 10 movies, compares the global Top 10 films with national Top 10 films using data on theatrical release. The percentage of nationally-produced films in the national Top 10 indicates the degree to which local films are important in the domestic market within a given country.

Figure 3 compares these two indicators. In general, increasing similarity results in a decrease in the percentage of national films in the Top 10. All countries with a degree of similarity above 50% have a small audience (below 10%) for national movies. Countries with a degree of similarity below 50%, however, show contrasting patterns. In these countries, the share of national movies in the Top 10 range from 35% in Korea and Morocco to 70% in Turkey. This indicates that consumer tastes differ from global trends in these countries since national films remain popular.

Widely divergent patterns can be seen in the United States and Nigeria, which can be explained by the nature and size of their film industries. In the case of the United States, 8 out of 10 films are in the global Top 10 list. While in Nigeria, because the mode of production is almost exclusively in video format for DVD release or home video viewing, it is more difficult to assess diversity based on the Top 10 films viewed in theatres. Data show that foreign films, mainly from Hollywood, dominate the national Top 10, largely because they are released in theatres. However, the degree of similarity with the global Top 10 is low (20%). This can be explained by the delayed release dates for foreign films. Theatres in Nigeria are scarce and often show foreign films which are no longer in the global Top 10.

FIGURE 3. DIVERSITY VERSUS HOMOGENEITY OF TOP FILMS CONSUMED GLOBALLY



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, April 2013.

DIVERSITY IN THE ORIGIN OF FILMS VIEWED: A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

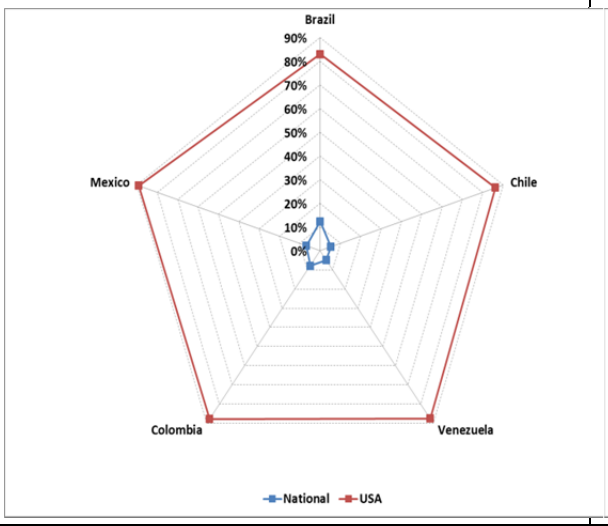
To complete the picture provided by the Top 10 popular movies, **Figure 4** identifies the patterns of the entire film consumption in various regions in 2011.

The figure shows that there is little diversity in film consumption in Latin America, where movies produced in the United States account for at least 80% of total market share of attendance. National films in the global Top 10 are almost nonexistent in this region, with the exception of Brazil, where locally-produced films account for a 10% share of attendance. The same situation prevails in Australia and Canada, where more than 80% of the audience share views American films.

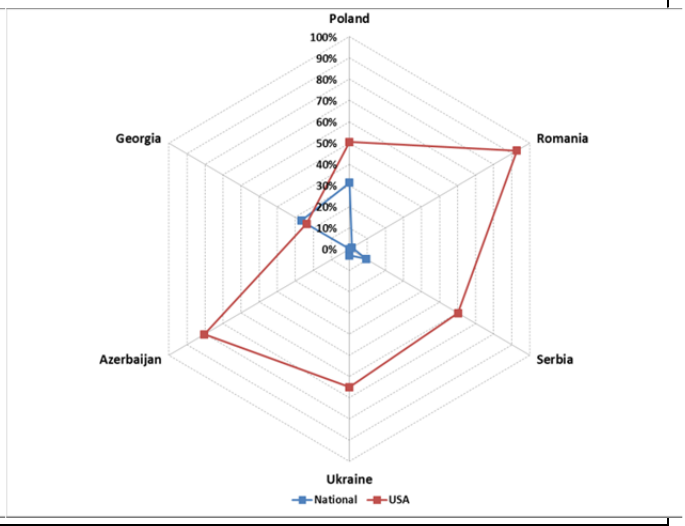
Although for most countries the share of the audience viewing national films is quite low, there are notable exceptions. The Republic of Korea is the only country where the audience share of national movies accounts for the majority (54%). This could be explained by national policies that impose a quota on the distribution of national films.

FIGURE 4. DIVERSITY VERSUS HOMOGENEITY OF TOP FILMS CONSUMED GLOBALLY IN 2011

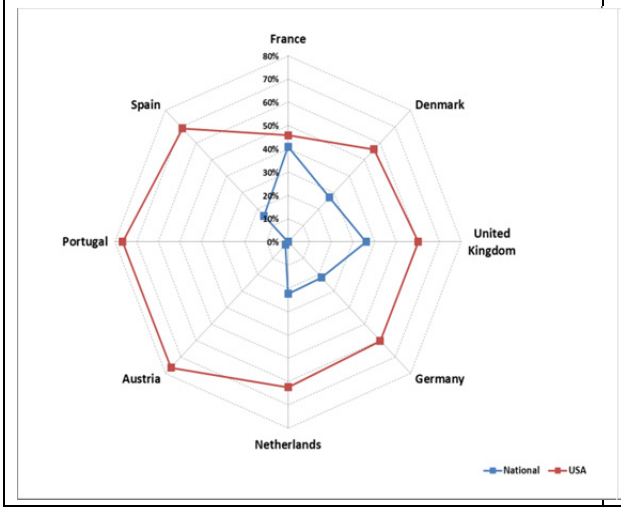
Latin America



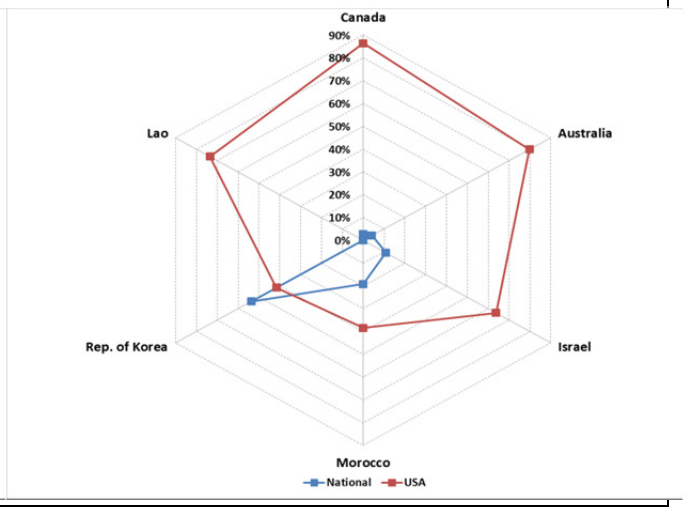
Central Asia and Eastern Europe



West Europe



Other countries



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, April 2013

Examples of countries with diverse film markets include Morocco and Georgia. In Morocco, films from the United States represent approximately one-third of audience share. Interestingly, the audience share for foreign films (excluding American films) is 42%, which is significantly higher compared to any other country for which there is data. A similar pattern is seen in Georgia, where 50% of films viewed are foreign (non-American), followed by 27% of audience share for national movies and 24% for American movies.

In some countries, the audience for national films approaches similar levels as for films produced in the United States. This is the case in France, where 41% of films viewed are national and 46% are from the United States. In the United Kingdom, the share of national movies is 36%, which is relatively high for Europe. This can be partially explained by several sequels, including the Harry Potter series, being in the national and global Top 10.

In conclusion, this brief analysis shows that language continues to be an important marker of diversity in film production. However, there are very different patterns of production and consumption between regions and between countries within the same region. The popularity of films from the United States, as illustrated by the similarity of the Top 10 films across countries surveyed, is clear. However, as this paper has shown, there are pockets of dynamism, where viewers will choose to view a film that reflects their culture more closely, be it domestically-produced or in a language of their country or region.

References

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UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2011). *Measuring the Diversity of Cultural Expressions: Applying the Stirling Model of Diversity in Culture*. UIS Technical Paper No. 6. Montreal: UIS.

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